

Developing Literacy Skills and Promoting Character Education With Picture Books for Middle School and High School

Teaching with Picture Books in Higher Grades

The primary focus of using picture books in higher grades is to increase students' literacy skills and ability to analyze short stories. Iris McClellan Tiedt, Dean of Education Emerita from Minnesota State University, in *Teaching With Picture Books in the Middle School*, published by International Reading Association, states in her introduction, "I am pleased to share this book about using picture books to stimulate students' thinking with teachers who are looking for ways to enhance their teaching. My aim is to show you how much picture books have to offer students in the upper grades, including middle school and even high school students."¹

Some of the reasons Tiedt gives in her introduction for using picture books are:

- Picture books provide wonderful opportunities for classroom discussion.
- Picture books provide engaging models for writing.
- Students can polish their oral language skills as they practice reading aloud, dramatizing, or storytelling.
- Older students can write and illustrate original books designed for children, thereby stimulating their own creativity.

Advantages of Another Sommer-Time Story™ Books for Higher Grades

These comprehensive books present abundant information in a few pages. This enables teachers to read the entire book in one class period.

These award-winning and colorfully illustrated stories stimulate students' thinking, reading, listening, writing, speaking, art, and media literacy skills.

The books present provocative topics that will encourage creative thinking and problem solving.

(Note: Some students may object to reading picture books in class. It is best for teachers to avoid using the term "picture books" when talking about these books. Teachers should be positive when bringing the books into the class, stressing that students will be analyzing award-winning books for content and art in order to become better writers and artists. Students are to use critical thinking skills to evaluate the author's intent in writing these character education books.)

Expected Outcomes

Evaluating these award-winning books will stimulate thinking, reading, listening, writing, speaking, and appreciation for art and media.

Students will evaluate and learn the various virtues and life skills that will help them live successful lives.

1. Iris McClellan Tiedt, *Teaching With Picture Books in the Middle School*, International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware, 2000.

Challenging with Advance Publishing's Mission Statement

Mission Statement: Providing exciting and inspiring character education materials that train and motivate children with positive virtues and life skills which enable them to live successful lives, resulting in stronger families, better schools, and a safer and more productive society.

- A. Have students read or listen to the book and then:
 - 1. List the virtues the book is promoting.
 - 2. List the life skills the book is promoting.

- B. Generate discussion from the various life skills and virtues presented.
 - 1. How can these virtues enable students to live successful lives?
 - 2. Discuss how these virtues result in:
 - A. Stronger families
 - B. Better schools
 - C. Safer society
 - D. More productive society

Discovery

What was the most exciting part of the story?

If the story has humorous events, ask what the events were?

If the story has historical scenes, discuss with students the culture of that country at that time.

Oral Language and Drama Skills

Use the award-winning read-alongs from Another Sommer-Time Story™ to encourage students to develop their oral language skills. Play the audio and then let students read the same material. Teach students how to read with expression. Encourage hand motions and facial expressions to create interest when reading a story.

Reading Picture Books to Younger Children

Older students will enjoy reading books to younger children. Provide opportunity for these students to read the books to children in the lower grades. Stress diction and excitement when reading storybooks.

Creating Original Story Books

Stimulate students' creativity by having an assignment in which they or a team can create their own storybook. Let them think of a virtue or an idea they want to promote, and then have them create a story.

Class Discussion

A. Select a book from the Another Sommer-Time Story™ series to examine the consequences the virtues being promoted. (Discuss both negative and positive outcomes.)

B. Define and identify virtues from the book. Instill a working knowledge of the virtues.

C. Identify the negative and positive virtues and make a diagram or other graphic organizers to show relationships and outcomes. (The following virtues are taken from the story book, *The Ugly Caterpillar*.)

Virtue	Negative Outcome	Positive Outcome
Friendship	Loneliness	Caring relationships
Positive mental attitude	Glass half empty	Glass half full
Generosity	A limited world	Expanding opportunities
Respect for others	Isolation	Companionship
Kindness	Unpopular	Popular

Puppet Show

Students are to make their own paper puppets and write a simple story line script from one of the Another Sommer-Time Story™ books. Have puppets interview one of the characters from the book. Present the puppet show to other grades, if possible.

Role Play

Students can pick a story and act it out before other students. (Role play could include improvising some props such as paper hats, beards, wings, etc.)